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Item 2-143

EA MT-050-05-02

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Dillon Field Office
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*Certified Mail No.*_____
Return Receipt Requested

4160
(MT-050)
September 21, 2005

Below is the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Proposed Decision regarding management of public lands (83,102 acres and 41 allotments) within the Centennial Watershed in Beaverhead and Madison Counties, Montana. Three alternatives were presented and fully analyzed in the Centennial Watershed Environmental Assessment (EA) # MT-050-05-02. The EA was sent to interested parties on July 1, 2005 for a 30 day public comment period. Eleven comment letters were received from interested parties and have been carefully reviewed and considered by the assigned interdisciplinary (ID) team and the Authorized Officer in preparing this Proposed Decision. Attachment 1 shows BLM's response to comments or concerns received during the public comment period.

Maps of pertinent lands, projects, and forest health, timber harvest and fuels treatment units that are included in this decision were attached to the EA that you received in July. If you need another copy of specific maps, please contact the Dillon Field Office at (406) 683-2337.

This Proposed Decision is being issued to all affected BLM grazing lessees, the interested public and other agencies that have participated in the Centennial Watershed Planning process that was initiated on May 25, 2004. The list of all grazing lessees, individuals, organizations and agencies that will receive this decision is attached.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed the Centennial Watershed EA and have determined that the selected action, along with the design features and terms and conditions described, does not constitute a major federal action affecting the quality of the human environment or causing unnecessary or undue degradation of the natural environment. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. I made this determination based on the context and ten intensity factors set forth in 40

CFR 1508.27.

This document is adequate and in conformance with Mountain Foothills EIS, the Dillon Management Framework Plan, and the Proposed Dillon Resource Management Plan as required by 43 CFR 4100.0-8.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED DECISION
Centennial Watershed Environmental Assessment EA MT-050-05-02

Introduction and Background

In 2004, a BLM ID team assessed the land health of BLM administered lands in the Centennial Watershed. The assessment covered forested areas, rangelands and riparian/wetland areas. The Centennial Watershed Assessment (Assessment) and associated Determination of Standards (Determination) for the assessment area were completed and released to the public on January 18, 2005. The BLM assessed the following five Land Health Standards: Upland Health including forest lands and rangelands, Riparian Health, Water Quality, Air Quality, and providing for Biodiversity in accordance with the 4180 Land Health Standards Manual.

Following the Assessment, the BLM completed the Centennial Watershed EA (MT-050-05-02) which analyzed and disclosed environmental impacts of implementing three management alternatives on the BLM lands in the Centennial Watershed. The EA included management alternatives for fuels and healthy forests, livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, fish habitat, recreation, TES species, wilderness, noxious weeds, cultural resources and roads.

All management alternatives are aimed at improving land health. The three alternatives fully analyzed in the EA were developed by the BLM in consultation with the grazing permittees, local communities, local landowners, conservation groups, state agencies and other federal agencies. Because livestock grazing is a primary vegetation management tool and authorized use, allotment boundaries were the most logical way to delineate the Land Health Assessment areas within the watershed. Additional information is available in the Centennial Watershed Assessment Report and the Centennial Watershed EA which are available at the Dillon Field Office.

Proposed Decision

I have decided to select Alternative B with some modifications resulting from public input. Alternative B, as outlined in the Centennial Watershed EA, will be implemented with the following changes: Two conifer encroachment prescribed burn units (COR1 and COR2) and one mechanical thinning/harvest unit (N2) as described under Alternative B in the Centennial EA will **NOT** be treated. Grazing management on the Ritchie Allotment will not be changed as described under Alternative B in the Centennial EA.

The actions included in this Proposed Decision are described more specifically below.

Resource monitoring will be conducted to measure progress toward meeting site-specific

objectives. Monitoring will be done according to the monitoring plan that was included as Appendix B with the Centennial EA.

Fuels, Forestry and Roads

My decision will allow salvage harvest of dead/dying timber, sanitation harvest of live trees, harvest of conifers in and around aspen stands, thinning of high density conifer stands, and opportunities for commercial and public utilization of forest products. BLM will also implement prescribed burns to reduce residual slash after harvest activities, protect Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas, promote aspen and whitebark pine regeneration, and reduce conifer expansion into aspen, sagebrush and grasslands. The following tables outline the proposed units, objectives, treatment types, and prescriptions for forest health treatments that will be implemented over the next several years. Unit locations and boundaries are shown on the Alternative B – Forestry/Fuels Units map found in Appendix A of the Centennial EA. Forest health treatments are displayed on an allotment basis in Table PD-2.

Table PD-2: Description of Forestry/Fuels Units

Unit Name	Acres	Objective(s)*	Treatment Type(s)
PC1	411	↑ forest health ↑ aspen and whitebark pine regen.	Commercial harvest Prescribed fire
PC2	579	↑ forest health ↑ aspen regen.	Commercial harvest Prescribed fire
PC3	33	Public safety Commercial firewood availability	Commercial harvest
PC4	105	↑ forest health	Commercial harvest Prescribed fire
PC5	245	↑ whitebark pine regen.	Non-commercial mechanical Prescribed fire
PC6	644	↑ aspen regen.	Non-commercial mechanical Prescribed fire
PC7	10	Public post and pole availability	Post and pole permits
BC1	1067	↑ forest health Create Wildland Fire Use buffer	Prescribed fire
BC2	89	↑ forest health Create Wildland Fire Use buffer	Prescribed fire
BC3	190	↑ forest health	Prescribed fire
BC4	54	↑ forest health ↑ aspen regen.	Commercial harvest Prescribed fire
BC5	103	↑ forest health	Commercial harvest Prescribed fire
BC6	31	↑ forest health	Commercial harvest (helicopter yarding only) Prescribed fire
Curry1	90	↑ forest health ↑ aspen regen.	Commercial harvest (helicopter yarding only)

Unit Name	Acres	Objective(s)*	Treatment Type(s)
LV1	3756	↑ forest health Create Wildland Fire Use buffer Protect Wildland Urban Interface	Non-commercial mechanical Prescribed fire
LV2	74	↑ forest health Protect Wildland Urban Interface	Commercial harvest Prescribed fire
HR1	992	↑ forest health Create Wildland Fire Use buffer Protect Wildland Urban Interface	Non-commercial mechanical Prescribed fire
N1	139	↑ forest health ↓ conifer encroachment	Commercial harvest Prescribed fire

* Abbreviations: ↑=increase ↓=decrease

Table PD-3: Alternative B Silvicultural Prescriptions

STAND TYPE	PRESCRIPTION*
Aspen	Cut all conifers within 2 aspen tree heights of viable aspen clones. All non-merchantable material would be left on site to protect aspen sprouts from browsing. Follow up prescribed burning would aim to consume the fine hazardous fuels but retain the larger woody component.
Lodgepole Pine >6" diameter at breast height (DBH) *Note: Mountain pine beetle is affecting lodgepole stands by attacking and killing lodgepole in patches. These patches of dead/dying lodgepole are intermixed with green un-infested lodgepole that is susceptible to future mountain pine beetle attack.*	Harvest all live infested trees and 80% of dead/dying trees. Harvest patches of green un-infested lodgepole up to 5 acres in size, focusing on stands with higher susceptibility to mountain pine beetle attack, and leaving groups of 10-25 non-infested trees per acre where feasible. Patch cuts would be separated by leave patches of non-infested lodgepole up to 5 acres in size, where these occur. 50% of green un-infested lodgepole would be left untreated. Patch boundaries would be shaped to blend with the topography. Some slash and non-merchantable material would be piled to create lynx denning structures. Any Douglas-fir intermixed in these stands would be left on a 20' x 20' spacing.
Lodgepole Pine <6" DBH	Do not treat and avoid skid trail disturbance, except in Unit PC7. In Unit PC7, trees would be thinned to a residual spacing of 10'-12'. Slash would be lopped to 18" above the ground or hand piled and burned.

STAND TYPE	PRESCRIPTION*
Dead/Dying Douglas-fir	Cut 90% of dead/dying trees <19" DBH. Leave all Douglas-fir snags >20" DBH unless they present safety hazard. Harvest all green Douglas-fir with evidence of successful beetle attack.
Green Douglas-fir and Mixed Conifer Stands	Thin Douglas-fir from below to an average residual basal area of 100ft^2/acre where trees occur. Associated species intermixed in Douglas-fir stands: Lodgepole pine-treat as described above; Subalpine fir-cut; Engelmann spruce-where it occurs in a patch greater than 1 acre in size, patch cut in up to 0.5 acre blocks. Leave all Engelmann spruce in SMZs, and if in patches less than 1 acre in size.
Uniform size Green Douglas-fir Stands <14" DBH	Thin from below to an average residual basal area of 100ft^2/acre where trees occur.

* Assume removal of merchantable products where practical from treatment units.

I have decided to develop a Wildland Fire Use Plan for the Centennial Mountains Wilderness Study Area (WSA), in compliance with management direction provided in the 2004 Dillon Fire Management Plan and the proposed Dillon Resource Management Plan, to maintain and restore forest health and reduce fuels accumulations. The plan would allow naturally occurring fires to burn under defined parameters to meet resource objectives. Fires that do not fall within the defined parameters or are a threat to public safety and private land will be suppressed.

Prescribed fire Units HR1, LV1, and BC1 are designed to prevent the east-west spread of wildland fire across the Centennial range and protect the WUI within the Centennial Valley. Unit boundaries are drawn using natural boundaries to preserve wilderness integrity. Within each unit, smaller units will be burned according to prescription and using natural barriers. Spots that occur within the main unit boundary may be allowed to burn if deemed safe and meeting resource objectives by the burn boss.

Unit PC3 will be made available to commercial firewood contractors for the permitted removal of dead/dying trees within 200' of the main Price-Peet Road, for up to 10 years after the completion of major activity in the area. This time period will allow for the removal of any additional mortality along the road.

Unit PC7 will be made available for permitted personal use cutting of post and poles. The existing closed road into the upper portion of this unit will be re-opened for up to 2 years to provide access for hand or small tractor/4 wheeler skidding in the upper portion of this unit, and then will be closed. After the road is closed, access to Unit PC7 will be from the Price-Peet Road only, which will limit activity to the lower portion of the unit.

For commercial harvest units, conventional ground-based harvest equipment will require yarding

distances of up to 1,000' or less for practical operations and access to log landings. Material in the Price Creek drainage will be transported on Price-Peet Road #1805. The existing closed road in Unit PC7 (0.4 mile) will be re-opened to provide landing space off of the main Price-Peet Road for helicopter decking of logs.

Some access to Units PC1, PC2 and PC4 will be made available to the general public for the permitted removal of firewood or other minor forest products. When harvesting operations are completed by the purchaser, gates will be installed on pre-existing roads which have both access to residual firewood and the least potential for resource conflicts. These roads will be opened to the public on a one-at-a-time basis for up to 2 years, and the road will be closed when firewood or other forest product removal is completed. The gate(s) will then be removed and the road will be either physically closed or recontoured, and reseeded. Temporary roads will be closed or reclaimed upon the completion of harvest activity, and will not be available for firewood or other forest product removal.

Where access for firewood or other forest product materials is impractical or creates unacceptable resource conflicts, residual slash material will be burned upon the completion of the purchaser's activity when conditions permit.

The road and crossing requirements for the proposed units are shown on Table PD-4 below and on maps in Appendix A of the Centennial EA. No additional new temporary roads or crossings are required to access the other proposed units included in this Proposed Decision.

Table PD-4: Road and Crossing Requirements for Proposed Units

Unit Name	Yarding Type	Existing Roads* (miles)	New Temp. Roads (miles)	Stream Crossings		
				Existing	Rebuilt	New
PC1	Conventional/Helicopter	1.7	1.2	0	0	0
PC2	Conventional/Helicopter	1.2	2.0	0	0	2
PC3	Conventional	Would use existing Price-Peet Road. No new temporary roads or crossings would be constructed.				
PC4	Conventional/Helicopter	0.1	0.6	0	0	0
PC7	Conventional/Helicopter	0.4	0.0	0	0	0
BC5	Conventional	0.0	1.0	0	0	0
TOTALS	**Conventional/Helicopter**	**3.0**	**4.8**	**0**	**0**	**2**

* These are roads that currently exist and are closed under the Centennial Travel Management Plan. They will remain closed following project completion.

Travel restrictions under the Centennial Travel Management plan will be implemented and restrictions will remain in place for public firewood removal and removal of other forest products. The Centennial Mountains WSA boundary is off-limits to firewood cutting and will be signed accordingly.

Approximately 600' of the west Price Creek Road (BLM Road # 1806) will be relocated to the

west where a stream meander is cutting into the road. The road is unsafe for public travel and is resulting in accelerated erosion as well as increased sediment inputs to Price Creek. The existing road will be recontoured and revegetated with native seed. Since this need is not directly related to forest management activity in the area, this work will be accomplished by a BLM Force Account crew or by contract.

Existing roads that do not meet State of Montana Best Management Practices (BMP) standards will not be used for forest product removal. The Decision for the Centennial Travel Management Plan closed these roads and this closure will be enforced.

Construction standards on new temporary roads will be the minimum required for safe transport of merchantable material. Road locations will be designed to minimize stream or wet area crossings.

All currently closed two track roads and temporary roads that are used for forest health treatments will be closed within 2 years post-treatment by recontouring and/or placing slash material on the road surface to preclude vehicle use, and reseeding with native grasses/forbs. New temporary road construction in Unit PC4 (.6 miles) will be recontoured post-treatment. The method of closing the remaining roads will be determined on a case by case basis by evaluating the feasibility in prohibiting unauthorized use, potential future use of the road and other resource concerns.

All applicable State and Federal Permits will be obtained and all permit conditions will be followed. State of Montana BMPs and the Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) laws will be followed for all forest health treatments or road activities in or near riparian areas.

Projects which are likely to result in turbidity impacts will require review to determine whether State of Montana 318 Authorizations (Short Term Water Quality standards for Turbidity) are necessary.

New stream crossings on existing or new temporary roads will be either culvert installation or temporary bridge crossings, whichever better fits the resource concerns. Upon completion of use, new crossings on BLM lands will be removed and reclaimed.

The culvert on the West Fork of Price Creek in T14S, R4W, sec.6, SW ¼ will be removed and rehabilitated. This crossing forms an obstruction to flow during high runoff.

Both conventional ground-based harvesting equipment and/or helicopter logging will be used, depending on terrain, access, and soils. Harvest activity and associated operations will be permitted between December 2 and October 15.

With the exception of Unit PC3 (due to public safety concerns), an average of 2 to 5 existing snags or green recruitment snags will be left per acre within all commercial treatment units.

If market conditions permit, biomass material may be removed from within mechanical treatment units. Sufficient residual biomass material will be left on site to maintain nutrient recycling and desirable microsite conditions.

Log landings will be reseeded with native grasses/forbs.

One season of rest from livestock grazing is usually needed prior to burning to allow sufficient fine fuels (grasses) to ensure a successful prescribed burn. BLM policy requires a minimum of 2 growing seasons of rest from livestock grazing following burns to allow re-growth and re-establishment of vegetation in the treated area.

Treatment by prescribed fire will only be completed where the ground fuels and conifer trees are in a condition that will meet the prescription objectives. Prescribed burning will require an approved burn plan prior to implementation. In areas where vegetation conditions will not allow prescribed fire to achieve the objectives alone, a combination of non-commercial mechanical treatments followed by prescribed burning may be utilized.

The implementation of prescribed fire treatments will occur over the next 5-10 years. Units will be burned as fuel and weather conditions allow, but consideration will be given to the effects of temporarily restricting public access in portions of the Centennial Mountains while prescribed burns are in progress. Fire managers will coordinate the timing of prescribed fire treatments (seasonally) and the area treated per year to minimize public resource use conflicts.

In Harvest/Burn units, burning will take place within three years following harvest to allow sufficient curing of fuels and to ensure consumption of residual slash.

Cultural Resource Management

As required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, a Class III cultural resource inventory is required prior to the implementation of any proposed range or habitat improvement projects. Should significant cultural resources be identified, adverse impacts will be mitigated through project abandonment or redesign. Care will be taken to avoid and protect significant cultural resources and any standing structures (should they occur) during the course of any proposed prescribed fire treatments. In addition, personnel from the BLM should be notified of the presence and location of any cultural resources should they be encountered by any of the timber contractors or permittees during the course of operations on public lands.

Livestock Management, Water Developments and Fences

I have decided to renew the following Term Grazing Permits for a period of ten years with no new mandatory terms and conditions. Resource conditions on these allotments were determined to be meeting Land Health Standards, had no identified site specific concerns related to current livestock management and needed no changes to facilitate improved livestock management. These allotments include the Coconougher Individual, Shambo Units, Peet Creek, Long Creek

AMP, Centennial, Duff Creek AMP, Red Rock, 7L SGC, Bean Place, Centennial Isolated, Curlew, Davis Common SGC, Jones SGC, Long Creek SGC, Lousy Springs, Mata-Stib SGC, McCandless Brothers, Monida-Corral Creek, Morton Individual, Rody Individual, East Clover Creek and Shineberger allotments. On the Lima Reservoir Allotment, resource concerns will be mitigated by off-site water located on private and/or state land. The Term Grazing Permit for this allotment will be renewed for a period of ten years with no new mandatory terms and conditions. The Term Grazing Permit will also be renewed for a period of ten years with no new mandatory terms and conditions on the Ritchie Allotment. The No action alternative was selected for this allotment.

Term Grazing permits for the other 17 allotments in the Centennial Watershed will be modified and issued for a period of ten years with new terms and conditions as outlined below. These allotments include Antelope Peak, Fish Creek, Munday Reservoir, Mud Lake, Munday East, Oxbow, Windmill, Passmore, Phalarope East, Monida Hill, Price Creek, Brundage Creek, Saier Individual, Sand Dunes, Brundage Bridge, Tom Creek and Cook Sheep Camp

General Livestock Management Decisions:
The BLM will encourage and in some cases may require temporary electric fence, appropriate livestock supplement placement, riding, and herding as means of improving livestock distribution. When used, livestock supplement will be placed on ridges or terraces at least ¼ mile from the nearest livestock water source in areas naturally devoid of vegetation.

Permittees and lessees on all allotments along Lima Reservoir are encouraged to work together to control livestock. As the water recedes, cattle can cross the reservoir and drift into areas in which they are not authorized. Operators should communicate these problems immediately once they are discovered and the owners of the livestock are responsible to move them back to areas in which they have proper authorization upon notification. Owners of livestock that cause continuous or continually recurring problems and do not take actions to control their livestock will be asked to remove the cattle from their public land permits for the season to an area where they can be controlled and/or trespass action will be initiated.

Annual utilization guidelines on cool season bunch grasses will be 50% (to maintain vigor) using grazed/ungrazed methodology OR when livestock use on sedges averages 4 inches along the greenline (to prevent excessive trailing along streams), whichever occurs first. This will apply to applicable pastures used any time between 5/1 and 9/29. The annual use guideline for palatable woody species (such as willows and aspen) will be when cumulative use of current year's growth reaches approximately 50%. This applies to applicable pastures used any time between 9/30 and 12/31. These guidelines will be applicable to all allotments included in the Centennial Watershed, except for those that already have allowable use levels or guidelines identified in existing AMPs (Price Creek, Peet Creek, Long Creek and Shambo Units). It is not expected that these guidelines will be met in every area during every year due to variation in annual weather patterns. The guidelines will be used as a gauge or tool to help determine timing of pasture moves and to determine if there are areas that need more intensive management to make progress

towards long term goals and objectives.

Up to 5 years will be allowed to phase in projects and operational changes described under action alternatives. This would increase economical and logistic feasibility for permittees and the BLM.

Term grazing permits will be amended to state that depredation losses from gray wolves and grizzly bears are possible.

For water developments, all applicable State and Federal Permits will be obtained and all permit conditions will be followed. A Jurisdictional Determination will be sought to determine if spring sources are "Waters of the United States". New spring developments or drilled wells will require applications for water rights.

Springs and natural wet meadows will be protected when developing water for livestock. Spring sources will be fenced to exclude livestock use on all developed springs. Adequate water will be left at the spring source to maintain wetland hydrology, hydric soils, and hydrophytic vegetation

Any water developments and associated stock tanks that are no longer in use will be removed, but fence exclosures to protect the spring source will be maintained.

Any new or replacement boundary fences will normally be a 4-wire fence and any new interior (pasture) fences will normally consist of 3 wires. All fences would be in conformance with BLM Fencing Handbook H-1741-1. Existing fences on public land that impede wildlife movement will be modified or rebuilt to BLM specifications as outlined in the aforementioned Handbook as resources allow.

Allotment Specific Decisions
I have decided to revise grazing management, construct structural range improvement projects and/or change allotment boundaries on the Antelope Peak, Fish Creek, Monida Hill, Munday Reservoir, Oxbow, Passmore SGC, Phalarope East, Price Creek, Brundage Creek, Lima Reservoir, Mud Lake Field, Saier Individual, Sand Dunes, Brundage Bridge, Cook Sheep Camp, Morton Ind. SGC, Munday East, Tom Creek, and Windmill allotments as described below. The proposed projects are shown on individual Allotment Maps in Appendix A of the Centennial EA.

Antelope Peak Allotment #20179
The authorized livestock grazing use will be changed

From:

Pasture	# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
Open Range	167 cattle	May 1 – October 31	38	Active	384
Poor Farm	101 cattle	May 1 – October 31	30	Active	183

To:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
262 cattle	June 1 – November 30	36	Active	567

Terms and Conditions: The Antelope Peak Allotment will be managed under a two pasture deferred rotation system. Each pasture will be deferred from livestock grazing until after seed ripe of perennial cool season grasses (August 10) every other year as shown below.

	North	South
Year 1	June 1 – August 10	August 11 – Nov. 30
Year 2	August 11 – Nov. 30	June 1 – August 10

Fish Creek Allotment #20172
The authorized grazing use will be changed

From:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
450 cattle	June 5 – June 15	100	Active	15
450 cattle	June 16 – July 2	50	Active	126
650 cattle	July 3 – July 15	50	Active	139
31 cattle	July 16 – October 2	50	Active	40
650 cattle	October 3 – October 27	50	Active	267

To:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
450 cattle	June 13 – July 2	50	Active	148
700 cattle	July 3 – July 16	50	Active	161
700 cattle	September 30 – October 22	50	Active	265

Terms and Conditions:
The allotment will be managed under a two unit deferred rotation system (spring or fall) as shown below.

	West Unit (Fish Creek)	East Unit (Metzel Creek
Year 1	450 Cattle 6/13 – 7/2 700 Cattle 7/3 – 7/16	700 Cattle 9/30 - 10/22
Year 2	700 Cattle 9/30 – 10/22	450 Cattle 6/13 - 7/2 700 Cattle 7/3 – 7/16

No additional fences will be built initially. Control of livestock will be by riding and salt and supplement placement. There may be some overlap of use in the units because of the lack of fences between the units, but it is expected to be minimal. If determined through the first two grazing cycles that a pasture fence is needed to mitigate excessive drift, approximately 3 miles of pasture fence will be constructed.

The following structural projects will be implemented on the Fish Creek Allotment.

- Off site water will be developed from a spring in the upper drainage of Metzel Creek at T.13 S., R. 3 W., section 1, NW¼ NE¼ . This will include approximately 1 mile of pipeline and a water trough.
- A hardened crossing will be constructed on lower Fish Creek near the fenceline (T.13 S., R. 3 W., section13, NE ¼ SE 1/4).

Optional Project

- Approximately 1 mile of new fence (3 wire) will be constructed on BLM administered lands and approximately 2 miles of new fence will be constructed on State Lands in cooperation with Mt. Dept of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). This fence will be located at T. 13 S., R. 3 W., section 2 E½ (BLM land) and sections 11 and 14 E½ (State Land).

Munday Reservoir #21076, Mud Lake Field #30260 and Munday East #20162 Allotments
The Munday Reservoir, Mud Lake Field and Munday East Allotments will be combined into one allotment called the Mud Lake Allotment #30260.

The authorized grazing use will be changed

From:

Allotment	# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% PL	Type Use	AUMs
Munday East	8 cattle	May 1 – October 31	100	Custodial	48
Mud Lake Field	6 cattle	May 15 – November 15	100	Custodial	36
Munday Reservoir	13 cattle	May 1 – October 31	100	Custodial	79

To:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
33 cattle	June 1 – October 31	100	Active	166

Terms and Conditions:

The Mud Lake Allotment will be managed under a four pasture deferred rotation system as shown below. Authorization will be 166 active AUMs of use on the public land and billed as a custodial allotment.

	Middle	Reservoir	East	West
Year 1	8/16 – 9/22	9/23 – 10/31	6/1 – 7/7	7/8 – 8/15
Year 2	7/8 – 8/15	8/16 – 9/22	9/23 – 10/31	6/1 – 7/7
Year 3	6/1 – 7/7	7/8 – 8/15	8/16 – 9/22	9/23 – 10/31
Repeat				

Oxbow #20735 and Windmill # 20733
The Oxbow and Windmill allotments will be combined into one allotment called Oxbow #20735.

The authorized grazing use will be changed

From:

Allotment/Pasture	# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% PL	Type Use	AUMs
Oxbow/ River	150 cattle	July 26 – August 15	62	Active	64
/ South	81 cattle	May 1 – October 31	58	Active	284
/ East Forties	28 cattle	May 1 – November 14	100	Active	182
/ Sand Hills	350 cattle	August 1 – October 14	16	Active	138
/ Falcon	350 cattle	July 1 – August 1	49	Active	180
/ Falcon	32 cattle	September 1 – October 15	49	Active	23
Windmill	13 cattle	May 15 – November 14	100	Custodial	79

To:

Allotment/Pasture	# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% PL	Type Use	AUMs
Oxbow	445 cattle	May 15 – November 16	35	Active	952

Terms and Conditions:

- The allotment will be managed under a short duration, rapid rotation system. There will be 26 different units (pastures) and each unit will be grazed by livestock from 3 to 10 days depending on size of units and time of year. Each unit will be grazed only once each year. Early season (rapid growth) grazing duration will be 2 to 7 days and duration will be 5 to 14 days in the non growing season, again depending on pasture size. Each unit may be grazed each year, but the timing of grazing will be changed each year to promote or retain plant vigor.
- Cooperative management will continue between BLM, the livestock permittee, MT DNRC, Red Rock Refuge and The Nature Conservancy. Annual meetings will be held to determine annual pasture rotation, coordinate projects and share monitoring data and progress reports.
- Critical nest areas and times (4/15 – 6/15) for trumpeter swans will be avoided by either not authorizing use until after June 15 in the pastures where the nests are located, or if use is authorized prior to June 15, it will only occur one in three years. Because of the concentration of nest areas and the number of units in this allotment it will be necessary to occasionally authorize livestock use prior to June 15 to allow proper vegetative management in the allotment as a whole. This will be a priority issue to be discussed and worked out each year at the annual cooperative operating meeting.
- Pasture fences will be 2 or 3 strand high tensile electric.

The following structural projects will be implemented or allowed on the Oxbow Allotment.

- The 400 unit, Ditch field, Horse pasture and Falcon unit may be cross fenced if deemed necessary for livestock distribution. This will include up to 2 miles of fence.
- Pipelines and tanks will be installed in six pastures to provide off-site water and reduce the need to water in Red Rock Creek. These pastures include Sandhill, Falcon, River, North Kennedy, South Kennedy and Winslow.

- All pastures may have sub units created with temporary electric fences. Each sub-unit will be grazed from 3 to 10 days.

The following vegetation treatment may be implemented on the Oxbox Allotment

- Up to 181 acres of sand dunes habitat in the Windmill unit within the proposed Centennial Sand Dunes ACEC may be treated with prescribed fire and prescribed livestock grazing as described below under Centennial Sand Dunes Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Management.

Passmore #20193

The authorized grazing use will be changed

From:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
8 cattle	August 1 – September 30	100	Active	16

To:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
32 cattle	September 1 – 15	100	Active	16

Terms and Conditions:

The allotment will be managed under a rest rotation system as shown below.

	Passmore
Year 1	9/1 – 9/15 32 Cattle
Year 2	Rest

Approximately ¾ mile of 4 wire standard type fence will be constructed and/or reconstructed around the allotment (80 acres parcel) to allow prescriptive management.

Phalorope East #20177 and Monida Hill #20023

The Monida Hill and Phalarope East allotments will be combined into one allotment, called the Monida Hill Allotment #20023. The combining of these allotments will result in three pastures, Lower Reservoir, Middle and Monida Hill

The authorized grazing use will be changed

From:

Allotment	# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% PL	Type Use	AUMs
Phalarope East	370 cattle	June 1 – October 31	22	Active	409
Monida Hill	117 cattle	May 20 – July 10	100	Active	200

To:

Alloltment	# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% PL	Type Use	AUMs
Monida Hill	500 cattle	June 1 – September 1	See below*	Active	607

*The Monida Hill Pasture has 200 AUMs of section 3 preference and Lower Reservoir and Middle Pastures have a combined total of 407 AUMs of section 15 preference. The Monida Hill Pasture will be billed at 100% public land and the Lower Reservoir and Middle Pastures will be billed at an average of 64% public land, based on utilizable AUMs.

Terms and Conditions:

The Monida Hill Allotment will be managed under a three pasture rest rotation grazing system as shown below.

	Lower Reservoir 124 AUMs	Middle 283 AUMs	Monida 200 AUMs
Year 1	Rest	7/15 – 9/1 500 cattle up to 19 days	6/1 – 7/14 500 cattle up to 12 days
Year 2	6/1 – 7/14 500 cattle up to 21 days	Rest	7/15 – 9/1 500 cattle up to 12 days
Year 3	7/15 – 9/1 500 cattle up to 21 days	6/1 – 7/14 500 cattle up to 19 days	Rest

The number of days used can be increased if the number cattle is reduced as long as AUMs or schedule season of use in any pasture is not exceeded on any given year. For example, if the operator decided to run 250 cattle in the Middle Pasture, the days of use could be increased to up to 36 days within the schedule season of use.

The following project will be implemented on the Monida Hill Allotment

- The spring source in T.14 S., R.6 W., section 22 (Middle Pasture) will be fenced to protect the water source and associated wetland and water will piped to a nearby water trough to provide off-site water.

Price Creek #30040

The current three pasture rest rotation grazing system with the use of sub-pastures will be continued as outlined in Price Creek Allotment Management Plan (AMP). Livestock numbers, season of use and AUMs will remain the same and are shown below.

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
468 cattle	June 15 – October 15	76	Active	1468

The following revisions will be included in the management of the Price Creek Allotment

- The Duck pond field will be used every other fall rotation, if needed, for up to 15 days to meet vegetation objectives.
- The 80 acre pasture north of the road between private parcels will be used as a temporary gathering or holding pasture for one to two days during the spring and fall annually. When it is not being used as a holding pasture, the gate will be closed and livestock use

excluded.

- The East Fork field will be used for up to 7 days coming or going to the State field with up to 350 head. This will be a short duration deferred treatment for this pasture.
- The East Fork and West Fork of Corral Creek will not be excluded from livestock grazing as previously planned. These creeks were found to be properly functioning during the 2004 assessment and cultural resource concerns preclude structural projects (fences) in this area.
- The allowable use guidelines would continue on Price Creek as outlined in the existing management plan.

The following projects will be implemented or allowed on the Price Creek Allotment. The list is in priority order and may take up to 10 years to complete, pending funding and feasibility.

- Construct Lima Reservoir water gap (1/4 mile) where E & W Reservoir fields meet.
- Develop two additional springs above Tree Frog spring if adequate water is available to provide more reliable water (600ft pipe) and storage tank. An alternative to this will be to pipe water from a well on private land in section 24.
- Fence water troughs in the corner of Crescent and Lower Sand fields for use in multiple pastures.
- Construct fence to split Timber pasture (2 miles) N side section 4 & 5
- Construct fence to split Sand Creek pasture (1/2 mile) at Tree Frog Spring
- Construct Little Table Mountain drift fences (up to 1/2 mile) several on the north side of Little Table at approximately the State land boundary.
- Construct State Ridge let down fence (1/4 mile with two let down sections)
- Construct ¼ mile of fence and install a double gate in road fence on the west end of the 80 acre pasture.
- Construct fence (2 miles) to split the state field
- Rebuild Centennial divide fence (1/2 mile) West end of Little Table Mountain
- Develop water in Timber pasture by installing 2 pipelines out of Price Creek (CE 72 and CE 64) with four water troughs located in sections 32, 33, 5, & 4.
- Move spring development in section 33 of Timber pasture approximately ¼ mile south.
- Develop two additional springs in section 29 in the Timber Pasture.
- Develop one additional spring in section 25 of the Sand Creek pasture.

Brundage Creek #20708

The authorized grazing use will be changed

From:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
164 cattle	April 15 – October 30	85	Active	912

To:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
178 cattle	May 1 – October 30	85	Active	912

Terms and Conditions:

The deferred rotation/alternating seasons grazing system outlined in the Brundage Creek AMP will be continued.

The following projects will be implemented on the Brundage Creek Allotment.

- The spring source and associated dams at T. 13 S., R. 3 W. section 27 E½, in the East pasture will be fenced and water piped to a water trough away from the stream reach to provide off-site water.
- The water gap located at T. 13 S., R. 3 W. section 27, S½, on the Red Rock River in the East pasture will be hardened with rock to reduce stream bank impacts at this watering location.

Centennial #20710

The authorized grazing use will not be changed.

- Up to 118 acres of sand dunes habitat within the proposed Centennial Sand Dunes ACEC may be treated with prescribed fire and prescribed livestock grazing as described below under Proposed Centennial Sand Dunes ACEC Management.

Lima Reservoir #10151

The authorized grazing use will not be changed.

- Off site water will be developed on private or State land by the permittee approximately ½ mile north of stream reach CE 141 (T.14 S., R. 5 W., section 2, NW¼) in the East Unit to provide off-site livestock water.

Saier Individual # 20169

The authorized grazing use will be changed.

From:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
105 cattle	September 1 – 30	100	Active	104

To:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
105 cattle	July 1 – September 30	100	Active	104

Terms and Conditions:

The allotment will be managed under a four year rest rotation grazing system authorizing up to 105 cattle for 30 days each year as shown below. The rest year will coincide with the adjacent USFS Elk Lake allotment and early, middle and late treatments will be opposite of the adjacent Elk Lake allotment to eliminate conflict with watering needs on the shared pipeline.

	Saier Allotment
Year 1	Early (July)
Year 2	Middle (August)
Year 3	Late (September)
Year 4	Rest

The following project will be implemented on the Saier Individual Allotment pending cooperation with the USFS and USFS permittees.

- The existing pipeline on the USFS Elk Lake Allotment will be extended to the north portion of the Saier Allotment (T. 14 S., R.1.E, section 5 NW¼) to provide a reliable water source on the allotment.

Sand Dunes # 20732
The authorized grazing use will be changed

From:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
72 cattle	June 1 – July 15	100	Active	107

To:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
108 cattle	August 10 – October 15	100	Active	107

Terms and Conditions:
The allotment will be managed under a deferred grazing system. Grazing use will be authorized annually after seed ripe for up to 30 days between August 10 and October 15 for up to 107 AUMs.

The following project will be implemented on the Sand Dunes Allotment

- The pond located on private land adjacent to the north end of allotment will be fenced into the allotment to provide an adequate water source to facilitate livestock management. The pond is located at T. 13 S., R. 2 W., section 14 SW¼, SE¼.

The following vegetative treatment may be implemented on the Sand Dunes Allotment.

- Up to 647 acres of sand dunes habitat within the proposed Centennial Sand Dunes ACEC may be treated with prescribed fire and prescribed livestock grazing as described below under Proposed Centennial Sand Dunes ACEC management.

Brundage Bridge #20707
The authorized grazing used will be changed on a portion of this allotment.

From:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
20 cattle	May 1 – November 14	100	Active	130

To:

Pasture	# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% PL	Type Use	AUMs
Brundage Riparian	160 cattle	15 days between June 15 and November 14	100	Active	80

Brundage custodial	8 cattle	May 1 – November 14	100	Active	50

Terms and Conditions:
The eastern BLM tract in the Brundage Bridge Allotment (T. 13 S., R, 3 W., section 34 N½ and section 27 S½) will be fenced with either a 3 wire electric fence or a 3 wire barbed wire fence. This is the public land parcel in which the Red Rock River flows through. This unit will be called the Brundage Bridge Riparian Pasture. The riparian pasture will be managed under a rest rotation grazing system as shown below.

	Brundage Bridge Riparian Pasture
Year 1	6/15 – 11/14 80 AUMs 160 Cattle for up to 15 days
Year 2	Rest

- In the riparian pasture, cattle numbers could be increased if numbers of days were reduced as long as authorized AUMs are not exceeded.

The following project will be implemented on the Brundage Bridge Allotment.

- Approximately 1¾ miles of new fence (3 wire electric or 3 wire barbed) will be constructed around the Riparian Pasture located at T. 13 S., R, 3 W., section 34 N½ and section 27 S½.

Morton Individual # 20163
The authorized grazing use will not be changed. The allotment boundary will be adjusted to slightly to match proposed the boundary change for the Tom Creek Allotment resulting from the fence construction in Corral Creek.

Ritchie #30610
The authorized grazing use will not be changed. During the Centennial Assessment, the uplands in this allotment were found to be Functioning at Risk with a static trend because of consistent spring grazing. This is a 160 acre public land parcel fenced in with a large privately owned pasture. No high resource values were identified on this parcel of public land and there is no riparian or wetland habitat. The cost to fence this into a separate pasture is not justified based on the limited resource values that this parcel provides. We expect the condition of this allotment to remain static.

Tom Creek # 20701 and Cook Sheep Camp # 00767
The Cook Sheep Camp and Tom Creek Allotments will be combined into one allotment called Tom Creek #20701. This will result in the following changes in authorized use.

From:

Allotment	# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% PL	Type Use	AUMs
Tom Creek	2 cattle	May 16 – Ocotber 20	100	Custodial	10

Cook Sheep Camp	2 cattle	June 16 – October 7	100	Custodial	7

To:

# & Kind of Livestock	Grazing Period	% Public land	Type Use	AUMs
4 cattle	June 8 – October 15	100	Custodial	17

- The authorized area of use (allotment boundary) will be changed to reflect the public land area that has historically and is currently being grazed by livestock along the south side of the allotment. There are no fences to contain livestock in the areas that are authorized administratively. This is an administrative change and does not expand or change the use on the ground. The 40 acre isolated BLM administered tract on the north side of the allotment (T.14 S., R. 1 E. section 20, NW¼, NW ¼) will be fenced out of the allotment and will no longer be available for livestock use. The allotment boundary will also be changed slightly in the Corral Creek area by constructing the fence discussed below.

Terms and Conditions:
The permittee will use riding and salting to keep livestock on the private land and authorized use areas on BLM administered land.

The following project will be implemented on the Tom Creek Allotment

- Approximately ¾ mile of fence will be constructed in Corral Creek on the east end of the allotment.

Centennial Sandhills Proposed Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)
Management strategies to destabilize sand dunes and create early seral habitat for special status plants will be employed. Initially, up to 200 acres with high sagebrush and grass cover on moderate terrain within the proposed ACEC will be treated with prescribed fire followed by short-term high intensity grazing (up to two weeks in spring or early summer) for a period of two years. This high intensity grazing treatment may be used on the Sand Dunes, Centennial and Oxbow (Windmill Pasture) Allotments. Follow-up monitoring will determine the effectiveness of this strategy in providing early seral habitat for painted milkvetch, Fendler cat's-eye and sand wildrye. Adaptive management will be used to implement the same treatments or a variation thereof on the rest of the sand dune habitat within the proposed ACEC (up to 946 acres) with a target fire return interval of 20 -30 years. The Dillon Field Office will consult with the Montana State Office Botanist and Montana Heritage personnel to implement and monitor this project.

Integrated Weed Management
Management of noxious weeds and invasive species will continue in cooperation with Beaverhead and Madison Counties, The Nature Conservancy, other federal and state agencies, private landowners and other partners. The general strategy for the Centennial Watershed, which is relatively uninfested, will be an aggressive prevention and early detection/rapid response strategy. In addition, all known existing infestations of noxious weeds within the Centennial Watershed will continue to be treated annually. Education will continue to be an integral part of

noxious weed management in the area.

Areas planned for vegetative treatment (prescribed burns, timber harvest) will be inventoried for noxious weeds prior to implementation. These areas will be intensively monitored for noxious weeds for at least three years following treatment. All equipment used for implementing these treatments will be washed prior to arriving on site to prevent any new weed seed from being introduced into the area.

Wildlife, Fisheries, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive (TES) species

Enhancement to specific wildlife habitat such as aspen and whitebark pine, avoidance of important habitat, such as migration corridors, and mitigation designed for protection of habitat values for wildlife, fisheries and TES species are included in the design features of the forest and fuels treatments, livestock management, and structural projects planned. Additional mitigation specific to wildlife, fisheries, and TES species is described below.

Any fences on public land that were found to be barriers to wildlife movement will be modified to be consistent with BLM Manual Handbook H-1741-1 to allow for improved passage by wildlife.

The BLM will minimize disturbance surrounding sage grouse leks during the breeding season (March 15 – May 15) while completing any treatments, projects, and/or monitoring.

The BLM will minimize disturbance surrounding trumpeter swan nesting territories during the breeding season (April 15 – June 15) while completing any treatments, projects, monitoring, etc. Fencing of individual wetlands and construction of nesting islands to enhance nesting territories may be completed depending on the results of nesting success monitoring.

All forest and grazing treatments will be in compliance with the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan and the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy.

Prescribed burns, commercial harvesting and road construction may require an extended buffer zone of up to 300' adjacent to fish bearing streams dependent on slope, gradient, and species of fish present This will be determined on a case by case basis for each fish bearing stream after a site specific field examination and consultation with the DFO forester and fisheries biologist..

Prior to any surface disturbing activities in suitable habitat, sites will be surveyed for special status plants. If plants are found, they will be avoided if a negative impact is determined through a biological evaluation.

Recreation Management

The following projects were identified in the Centennial Mountains Travel Management Plan, completed in 2001. These projects are included in a prior decision and are shown here to

disclose a comprehensive list of actions and projects that are ongoing or will be implemented in the Centennial Watershed.

- Beyond the existing closure point in the Corral Creek Road, the road will be maintained to correct the gullying and divert water to prevent recurring erosion problems. It may be seeded, or otherwise allowed to naturally re-vegetate to discourage erosion, prevent noxious weeds and reduce long-term maintenance costs.
- BLM will continue to maintain approximately 25 miles of non-motorized trails in the Centennial Mountains, including approximately 8 miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.
- BLM will work with Beaverhead County to provide roadside pull-outs where the county road crosses public lands between Lakeview and Monida to improve safety and convenience for trailer-towing vehicles. Hiker and horse-friendly gates will be installed in two to four locations in existing fences in this area to better disperse visitor use through the hunting season.
- A legal trail easement will be pursued for upper Jones Creek trail in Section 34. If an agreement can not be negotiated, the trail will be re-routed to avoid private lands in that area.
- A primitive parking area will be provided at the Tipton-Winslow trailhead outside the WSA in conjunction with reclamation of the current unauthorized gravel pit. No toilet or other facilities will be provided there, consistent with the direction provided in the Wilderness EIS, and in keeping with the primitive character of the area.
- BLM will attempt to obliterate any user-created roads or trails developed through the unauthorized passage of vehicles within the planning area.
- Non-motorized trails identified for future maintenance by the BLM will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether they followed the most appropriate route. Re-routes or reconstruction will be implemented as needed based on the following criteria: 1) whether the current route was causing resource damage, 2) projected long-term maintenance costs of that route over other potential routes, 3) user-friendliness, including grade, hazards, and surrounding aesthetics. Specific trails which will be considered for future re-route include the Nemesis Mountain trail, Tipton-Winslow trail, and the portion of the Continental Divide Trail from Hellroaring Creek to Keg Springs.

In addition, major BLM trailheads and access points will be posted to advise recreationists about proper food storage requirements to avoid back country conflicts with grizzly bears.

Rationale for Decision:

My decision is based on the Centennial Watershed Assessment Report, the Centennial Watershed EA (MT-050-EA-05-02), detailed reports and site specific monitoring and assessments in the related allotment files and review of public comments. I have reviewed the alternatives analyzed in detail to determine if they were responsive to the purpose and need for this proposal and the issues relevant to it. I also reviewed the alternatives that were considered but not analyzed in

detail to help me decide if the analysis had considered a reasonable range of alternatives. I find that the alternatives considered address the key issues and provide a reasonable range to consider.

Managed wildfire, mechanical treatment (including commercial and non-commercial) and/or prescribed fire will help restore historic density, structure, species composition and disturbance regimes of BLM forest habitats. Restoring aspen and whitebark pine habitats will improve habitat for many species of wildlife by improving diversity and increasing these limited habitat types. Wildlife migration corridors were considered and will be maintained or enhanced by implementing the forest treatments. Hazardous fuels, specifically those in the Wildland Urban Interface will be mitigated. Timber and forest products will be offered to businesses and residents in the area which is expected to help the local economy.

Occupied westslope cutthroat trout habitat on BLM lands was a key issue during this planning process and will be protected during forest treatments by additional mitigation over standard SMZs and BMPs where necessary to prevent increased sediment input. WCT habitat will be improved and/or protected in the long term by implementing this plan.

Habitat for sensitive plant species will be increased and/or enhanced in the proposed Centennial Sand Dunes ACEC.

Prevention, detection, treatment and monitoring of noxious weeds will continue or be enhanced in the Centennial Watershed.

It is necessary to change livestock management some of the Centennial Allotments to be consistent with the BLM's Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health and to ensure progress is made toward achieving the objectives of the proposed action (EA, 1.4). Implementing the management strategies as detailed above authorizes sustainable use of public lands while making progress toward meeting the land health standards and site-specific resource objectives identified for BLM lands within the Centennial Allotments.

Under the livestock management strategies I have selected, later livestock turn-outs, shorter grazing periods and/or more frequent rest and deferment, are expected to enhance herbaceous plant vigor, production and residual cover throughout BLM lands within the watershed. This is expected to improve sagegrouse breeding and nesting habitat. Functional-at risk riparian and wetland habitats are expected to trend toward proper functioning condition under these livestock management strategies. Trumpeter swan and other waterfowl nesting habitat will be improved or protected by implementing the strategies and projects in this plan.

Authorizing the structural range improvements, temporary electric fence, protein block placement, riding, and herding will give the grazing lessees increased flexibility in managing the distribution and intensity of grazing across the allotments.

I have also determined that all grazing lessees currently permitted on the Centennial Allotments

have satisfactory records of performance and are in substantial compliance with the terms and conditions of their existing Federal grazing leases or permits that are being renewed with this decision.

The plan outlined in this decision is in conformance with the Dillon Management Framework Plan, the Mountain Foothills Environmental Impact Statement, and the proposed Dillon Resource Management Plan (RMP). It is in conformance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Taylor Grazing Act, the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management (43 CFR 4180), the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review, the Healthy Forests Initiative, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and with BLM policies and Federal regulations.

The proposed action was developed while considering the goals, objectives and management recommendations in the Memorandum of Understanding and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Montana, the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy, the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan, the BLM's National Sage-grouse Strategy, and the Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage Grouse in Montana.

In response to the BLM's request for comments, questions, and concerns on the Centennial Watershed EA (EA MT-050-05-02), several organizations and individuals had comments, expressed concerns or had questions regarding various resource management proposals in the management alternatives. The BLM welcomes and appreciates the input and interest expressed in the management of the public's land. We have considered all the comments we received and sincerely believe the questions and issues raised by concerned citizens, organizations, and colleagues are adequately addressed and explained in Attachment 1 of the Proposed Decision and/or Centennial EA.

Authority

The authority for this decision is contained in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The Land Use Plan and Rangeland Management program authority is found under 43 CFR 4100, the Forest Management Program authority is found under 43 CFR 5003. Pertinent authorities for administrative remedies are stated below.

4160.2	**Protests** - Any applicant, permittee, lessee, or other affected interests may protest the proposed decisions under Sec. 4160.1 of this title in person or in writing to the authorized officer within 15 days after receipt of such decision.
5003.3	**Protests** (a) Protests of a forest management decision, including advertised timber sales, may be made within 15 days of the publication of a notice of decision or notice of sale in a newspaper of general circulation. (b) Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. (c) Protests received more than 15 days after the publication of the notice of decision or the notice of sale are not timely filed and shall not be considered. (d) Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the decision to

be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available to him/her.
(e) The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of his/her review, serve his/her decision in writing on the protesting party.
(f) Upon denial of a protest filed under paragraph (a) of this section the authorized officer may proceed with implementation of the decision.

Provision for Protest and Appeal

Protests:
The decision to sell forest products is not protestable at this time. Under BLM regulations, that Decision does not become final until the Timber Sale Notice is published in local papers (43 CFR 5003.3). This is expected to happen in Fall 2006.

Any other actions described in this Decision may be protested by any applicant, permittee, lessee, or other interested party. A Protest related to prescribed burning and associated activities (i.e. non-commercial mechanical treatment) must be filed in this office within 15 days of the effective date of this Decision in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3. A Protest related to grazing management and associated activities (i.e. water developments, fencing modifications, etc.) must be filed in this office within 15 days of the effective date of this Decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4160.1. For purposes of protest, the effective date of this decision is September 21, 2005. Protests may be received in person or in writing to:

Tim Bozorth
Field Manager
1005 Selway Drive
Dillon, MT 59725

The protest, if filed, should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) as to why the Proposed Decision is in error.

In the absence of a protest, the Proposed Decision will become my final decision.

Appeals:
Any applicant, permittee, lessee, or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal and petition for stay of the decision pending final determination on appeal under 43 CFR 4160.4, '4.21, and '4.470. The appeal and petition for stay must be filed in writing within 30 days following receipt of the final decision.

The appeal shall state the reason(s), clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error.

Should you wish to file a motion for stay, the appellant shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

(1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.

(2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.

(3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and

(4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the petition for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer.

_____ _____

Dillon Field Manager Date

cc:

Certified -

Centennial Watershed – Notice of Proposed Decision
Attachment 1 – Response to comments

There were concerns expressed regarding timber harvesting units N1 and N2.
These harvest units were identified as being ecologically out of balance due to an altered fire regime and insect infestations. However due to the importance of the islands of habitat in the surrounding sea of sagebrush, N2 will be dropped from the proposed decision. Unit N1 will be treated as planned since these stands were targeted for selective understory removal to restore a Douglas fir savannah. This stand is very important for wildlife and under the No Action alternative, the stand would likely be lost if a wildfire occurred in this area due to the ladder fuels in the understory.

Concerns were expressed over treatment of burn units COR1 and COR2.
These units will be dropped from the proposed decision. This was decided due to the importance of maintaining a large block of undisturbed habitat on the westward extent of this migration corridor. This will allow for undisturbed security cover for ungulates and large carnivores adjacent to the bulk of forestry and fuels projects during implementation as well as maintain the existing sagebrush canopy cover for sagebrush obligate species.

Concerns were expressed that there are significant differences in unsuitability of potential lynx habitat between Alternative B and C and BLM did not demonstrate consistency with the LCAS.
No known occupied lynx habitat occurs within the watershed. The Centennial carnivore study is currently being conducted by the Wildlife Conservation Society to determine if there is occupied habitat. All forestry and fuels prescriptions follow guidance outlined in the LCAS, maintaining certain stand characteristics by selective harvest, piling slash to create denning structures and stimulating aspen regeneration. The LCAS outlines that "management actions should not change more than 15% of lynx habitat within a LAU to an unsuitable condition within a 10 year period" all treatments are well within the extent allowable. Implementation will not occur in two adjacent LAU's concurrently.

Comments were received regarding the snag retention design feature in this EA.
An average of 2 to 5 existing snags or green recruitment snags would be left per acre within all commercial treatment units, with the exception of Unit PC3 due to the public safety concern from dead/dying trees falling onto the road. This unit is 33 acres in size, and with the selective treatments surrounding this unit it is estimated that 2-5 snags/ac will be exceeded within the contiguous environment, therefore providing adequate habitat. The snag density will likely be higher than 2-5/acre due to the silvicultural prescription leaving 20% of dead/dying lodgepole pine trees, 10% of dead/dying Douglas-fir trees <19" DBH, and all Douglas-fir snags >20" DBH (unless they present a safety hazard). This snag density has been the standard used in the Dillon Field Office for over 10 years, and in addition to the woody debris from the logging process, is estimated to result in 10-20 tons/acre of down woody material.

There were concerns expressed regarding timber harvesting units and road building on 100% pure westslope cutthroat trout and their habitat in Bean Creek.
The only currently verified 100% pure WCT stream in the Centennial basin is Bear Creek, located approximately 1mile east of Bean Creek. Bean Creek, is listed by the State of Montana as 98% pure based on a 50 fish sample collected in 2002. In accordance with guidelines adopted under the current WCT conservation agreement, this purity level is sufficiently high to warrant protection of this population. Sufficient buffers, up to 300', will be put in place adjacent to Bean Creek to decrease any potential additional sediment input. Final buffer distance will be determined by the DFO fisheries biologist and forester as the final road location is developed.

Under the proposed decision there will be approximately 1 mile of temporary road constructed with no stream crossings for the Bean Creek timber harvest units. The location of the temporary road is not expected to result in impacts to the WCT population within this drainage. The road is only proximate to the stream at two locations and SMZs at these sites will be adjusted to provide sufficient buffers to prevent sediment input to the stream. There are no expected impacts to WCT under this proposed decision.

Concern that "consistency with the Act that established the WSA and with BLM policies is an issue that receives scant attention" in this EA:
The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) changed the previously designated "primitive area" into an Instant Study Area. The Instant Study Area has since been expanded through the BLM's FLPMA-directed intensive wilderness inventory to include contiguous surrounding lands in what is now officially referred to as the wilderness study area.. The *Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review*, or IMP, (H-8550-1) is the pertinent policy guiding management of lands within wilderness study areas to ensure "nonimpairment" of wilderness values as directed by FLPMA. The BLM has reviewed the sections of the EA on the anticipated impact to Wilderness Characteristics. We have addressed short and long term impacts to wilderness visitors' experiences, natural processes, potential for impacts related to fire suppression activities, influences on wildlife activities, consideration of "minimum tool" for work inside the WSA, etc. All of these are considerations guided by the IMP, and therefore, the BLM has appropriately addressed WSA issues.

One comment stated that the EA is inadequate because it does not evaluate a full and reasonable range of alternatives.
The BLM asserts that the EA is an adequate analysis from which the Authorized Officer can make an informed decision. A reasonable range of alternatives was considered and fully analyzed as required by the Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ). A "full" range of alternatives is not required or necessary for the Authorized Officer to make an informed decision.

One comment suggests that livestock grazing should be eliminated from public land.
The BLM's mission is to manage uses on public lands, not eliminate uses. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (as amended) defines the uses the BLM "manages" for. Eliminating livestock grazing from all BLM-administered land in the

Centennial Watershed was considered, but eliminated from detailed study (Section 2.2.1). This comment is outside the scope of this EA.

One comment suggested that scoping comments from the Watershed Assesment were not considered.
On the contrary, Alternative C (emphasizing the use of fire over mechanical treatments for Forest Health) was developed to address many of the scoping comments. All comments received were considered when developing alternatives. Several issues that were identified from public scoping comments were addressed in the EA.

There were several concerns regarding Noxious Weed Management.
The BLM shares the public's concern regarding noxious weeds. Since the Centennial Watershed is relatively weed free, with noxious weeds found primarily in trace amounts along roads, the management strategy for noxious weed management in this area will be a prevention and aggressive early detection/rapid response strategy. Also, all known infestations of noxious weeds will continue to be treated annually until they are eradicated. Education will continue to be part of BLM's weed management program in the Centennial Watershed. Noxious weed inventory will be completed prior to any vegetative treatments and these areas will be intensively monitored for several years after the treatments.

One comment promoted the rest-rotation grazing system and had concerns with other grazing systems.
There are several grazing systems that meet the physiological needs of vegetation. The most effective grazing system for a particular area depends on the resource objectives, topography, existing resource conditions and how closely the operator watches conditions. There is not a "one size fits all" grazing system that is best in all situations. For example, very short duration grazing treatments are extremely effective in improving riparian conditions, even when they occur every year, as has been documented over the past few years on the Oxbow allotment both by BLM and The Nature Conservancy. The BLM has designed specific grazing systems to address site specific resource concerns that were found during the field assessment.

There were some questions and concerns regarding management of the Centennial Sand Dunes ACEC.
According to the Proposed Dillon Resource Management Plan, the Centennial Sandhills ACEC will be managed to maintain the unique habitat within the sandhills area. The area supports ecological processes related to sand dune migration, which provides habitat for several special status plant species including sand wildrye, Fendler cat's-eye, and painted milkvetch. Loss of sand dune activity and other disturbances could put these values at risk.

Treating portions of the sandhills with prescribed fire followed by short-term high intensity grazing is one of the management strategies mentioned in the Proposed RMP intended to destabilize sand dunes and create early seral habitat for special status plants species. The short-term high intensity grazing would be implemented for at least one

year and may continue for up to three years following burning. While specifics have yet to be worked out, a combination of temporary electric fence, hauling water to temporarily-placed water tanks and/or daily riding and herding will be used to locate and control livestock within the burned areas. During the grazing treatment, dune destabilization will be the primary objective – heavy to severe utilization and/or trampling of any on-site vegetation is expected.

Adaptive management may include changing the timing, intensity and duration of the grazing periods. Adaptive management will also allow us to take advantage of any wildland fires that occur in the sandhills during the next 20 -30 years.

Site specific objectives are defined in the Centennial Monitoring Plan included with the Centennial EA. Monitoring in the Centennial Sandhills ACEC will include surveys to determine the distribution, resource conditions, and trends of special status plant species and representative habitats. This will include determining pre and post burn plant composition at treatment sites, checking for invasion of exotic species, monitoring localized disturbances (from livestock and wildlife use, unauthorized OHV use, recreational use, etc.), and determining trends in special status plant attributes. Monitoring methods will include establishing photo points and doing periodic ocular surveillance. Trends in special status plants and vegetation will be determined and may include such things as demographic studies, density, cover and frequency. Conducting vegetative attribute sampling will be in accordance with BLM Technical Reference 1730-1, "Measuring and Monitoring Plant Populations" (Elzinga, Salzer & Willoughby, 1998).

Comments were received recommending the cutting and/or removal of conifers in prescribed burn units prior to burning.

Mechanical treatment may be utilized in prescribed burn units outside of the WSA, however additional commercial harvest will not be considered in prescribed burn units. The majority of proposed burn units are outside of forest base acres where commercial timber harvesting is allowed. There are a few places where proposed burn units are within forest base acres, however the Alternatives developed in this EA aimed to achieve a balance between management techniques and therefore did not propose commercial harvest within the entire forest base acreage. These areas would also require additional road building, which was kept to a minimum for these proposed actions. These areas will be analyzed for potential treatment during the next cycle of watershed assessments. As stated in Section 2.3.3 (Features Common to Alternatives B and C), "In areas where vegetation conditions would not allow prescribed fire to achieve the objectives alone, a combination of mechanical treatments followed by prescribed burning may be utilized." Mechanical treatment prior to prescribed burning may be utilized outside of the WSA depending on the existing conditions, desired future condition, and objectives of the prescription. These will be developed during preparation of a burn plan and will identify where mechanical treatment will be used prior to implementation of a prescribed burn.

Comments were received regarding the silvicultural prescription for Douglas-fir and the diameter size limit for harvest.
The silvicultural prescription shown in Section 2.3.4, Table 5, aims to "restore/maintain historic density, structure, and species composition of forest and woodland habitats" and "improve forest health and increase resiliency to insects, disease, drought and wildland fire." (objectives for Forest and Woodland Health listed in Section 1.4.4). There is no diameter size limit set for green infested Douglas-fir because the objective is to reduce the existing population of Douglas-fir bark beetles and inhibit expansion of infestation into adjacent stands. While these trees are still green, there is a window of time to remove these trees before adult beetles emerge and attack new trees. The Douglas-fir bark beetle attacks larger diameter Douglas-fir trees, so there will likely be larger diameter green trees removed. However, all large diameter (>20" DBH) Douglas-fir snags will be left, unless they present a safety hazard, in order to retain the older structure characteristics of this forest type. The remainder of uninfested Douglas-fir trees will be thinned to improve moisture and nutrient availability, increase resiliency to beetle attacks, and restore the Douglas-fir savannah. This prescription will improve forest health while restoring/maintaining historic density and structure.

One comment was received regarding the cause of aspen decline and potential to increase decline through proposed treatments.
As stated in Section 3.2.1 under Issue #1, "Research indicates that greater than 70% of the area historically occupied by aspen has been lost in mid to lower elevation forests of the eastern Centennial Mountains, much of which is attributed to conifer encroachment and eventual species conversion (Gallant et al 2003)." "Based upon a comparison of 1942 and 2001 aerial photography of the Price Creek area, it is estimated that approximately 590 acres of aspen have either substantially declined or have been completely overtaken by conifers on BLM lands." Conifer encroachment was determined by the ID team to be the major factor of aspen decline in the Centennial watershed. Although browsing by ungulates can be an additional cause of aspen decline, the proposed treatments include design features to reduce browsing on aspen sprouts (Section 2.3.4, Table 5). Recent monitoring (August 2005) of the 2003 Winslow fire indicates that aspen regeneration is extremely productive and browsing by ungulates is low. The size and location of treatment units, in addition to the disturbance caused by the Winslow fire, aims to create areas of aspen regeneration spread out on a large enough scale to reduce browsing impacts on a localized level.

One comment was received regarding the cumulative effects of erosion and fine sediment production into creeks from the proposed treatments (fire and mechanical) in the aftermath of the Winslow Fire.
As described in Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 under Issue #2, the impacts associated with sedimentation as a result of the proposed treatments in Alternatives B and C are expected to be none to minor, and the potential for erosion would be reduced. In contrast, under the No Action alternative, the potential for high severity wildfire is the highest, which would increase runoff, streamflow, and potential for erosion (Section 4.2.1, Issue #2). These proposed treatments are designed to provide a long-term benefit by reducing the risk of soil erosion and sedimentation. The increased sedimentation and erosion potential

associated with treatments will be mitigated by adhering to State of Montana Best Management Practices, Streamside Management Zone laws, and requiring an extended buffer zone adjacent to fish bearing streams where determined necessary (Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.3). Treatments would be implemented over the next 5-10 years as budget, staffing, fuel and weather conditions allow. To comply with the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy, treatments will not occur in adjacent LAU's during the same time.

One comment was received recommending minimal skidding roads and distances and maximum use of slash windrows in forest treatments in both Bean and Price Creeks.
Minimizing skidding roads and distances, and using waterbars and slash windrows to mitigate sediment movement are standard operating procedures on Dillon Field Office timber sales. These procedures are also State of Montana Best Management Practices which BLM is required to follow.

Comments were received regarding the method of closing roads (physically closing vs. recontouring). The BLM received recommendations for both methods.
New temporary road construction in Unit PC4 (.6 miles) will be recontoured post-treatment due to the visibility from the Price-Peet Road and higher probability for unauthorized use. The method of closing the remaining roads will be determined on a case by case basis by evaluating the feasibility in prohibiting unauthorized use, potential future use of the road, and other resource concerns. Roads that are likely to be used in the future for management activities will likely be closed using physical barriers rather than recontouring. Physically closing roads by placing slash material on the road surface to preclude vehicle use has been used in the Dillon Field Office for over 15 years with nearly 100% success in prohibiting unauthorized road use, and has also kept post treatment sediment movement on roads to the same or lower levels as would be expected when recontouring.

Comments were received regarding the restoration of existing roads to meet BMP standards.
Existing roads that will be used for forest product removal will be maintained to the extent necessary to remove the products safely and mitigate resource impacts. Roads that are not currently open to public motorized travel and will not be used for forest product removal will not be opened even temporarily. However, the BLM has no plans to actively "restore" these areas. If site specific resource concerns are identified on these closed roads, (e.g. headcuts, erosion, weeds, etc) the concern will be addressed. These roads will be allowed to revegetate over time.

Recommendations for a preferred logging method (i.e. helicopter or ground-based) were received in support of both systems.
On the ground evaluations of slope, soil type and stability, and feasibility were completed by the Dillon Field Office forestry staff to determine the preferred logging method. A combination of helicopter and ground-based yarding methods will be used. The economic constraints of helicopter yarding distances greater than 0.5 mile has a major

impact on balancing this yarding method with haul roads use. This economic effect is further magnified by the recent increase in fuel costs.

One comment was received recommending the separation of "the problem of the wildland fire threat to homes from the problem of ecosystem sustainability due to changes in wildland fuels".
The ID team identified two separate issues related to these topics: Driving Issue #1: Forest and Woodland Health, and Resource Concern #8: Protection of Private Property by Wildland Fire (see Section 1.4.4). The objectives for Forest and Woodland Health discuss the desired future condition of increased forest health, restored historic range of variability, and reduction of fuel accumulations. The Forest and Woodland Health Issue discusses ecosystem sustainability, not protection of private property. In contrast, the Protection of Private Property by Wildland Fire Resource Concern has one key objective: protect Lakeview and other WUI areas from wildland fire. The Centennial Watershed EA separates these two issues throughout the analysis of proposed treatments.

One comment was received citing research on change in fire behavior resulting from forest thinning. The comment stated that "thinning can result in faster fire spread than in an unthinned stand."
The research cited in this comment letter (Graham et al, 1999a) states "Depending on the type, intensity, and extent of thinning, or other treatment applied, fire behavior can be improved (less severe and intense) or exacerbated." The silvicultural prescription shown in Section 2.3.4, Table 5 of the EA prescribes thinning from below in Douglas-fir forest types. As also cited in this letter from Graham et al, 1999a: "Depending on intensity, thinning from below and possibly free thinning can most effectively alter fire behavior by reducing crown bulk density, increasing crown base height, and changing species composition to lighter crowned and fire-adapted species. Such intermediate treatments can reduce the severity and intensity of wildfire for a given set of physical and weather variables. But crown and selection thinning would not reduce crown fire potential." This research supports the concept that thinning from below will alter fire behavior by reducing the potential for crown fires, reducing the duration of intensity, an increasing the ability for control with aerial application of retardants. This meets the objectives for Forest and Woodland Health as stated in Section 1.4.4.

There was a suggestion that BLM adopt Wild Land Fire Use for the entire Centennial Valley.
Areas designated Wildland Fire Use require two key qualities. The area must be large enough to support fire spread under anticipated conditions and, the area must be one of minimal human interaction where occupancy can be regulated during periods of greatest fire spread. The Centennial Valley is limited in both of these qualities. With fine fuels composing the majority of the bottom and north sides, fire spread would be rapid and growth would be large. Private land would be threatened. The WSA boundary encompasses the greatest opportunity, with introduced prescribed fire breaks and the Winslow fire area to allow a naturally ignited fire to burn under natural conditions without threatening life and property.

One comment suggested that BLM focus on structure protection during wildfire rather than using prescribed fire for reducing the risk of Wildland Urban Interface.
The proposed prescribed fires in the in the Centennial Valley, specifically the units near Lakeview (LV1) Bean Creek (BC1,2,3) and Hell Roaring (HR1) serve 2 main functions: 1)they provide buffers around areas with high human use from either wildland fire or Wildland Fire Use; 2)they created lateral breaks within a small WSA to maximize the opportunity to allow natural fire to play a natural roll with Wildland Fire Use. With current and expected tree mortality from insects and disease, a proactive approach to maintaining a healthy stand in the WSA is justifiable. Over time conditions have been altered from the historic range of variability, and in the event of a wildfire there is the potential to burn much more intensely and over a larger area than it would have historically.
Specific site protection would protect structures under certain wildfire conditions, however the cost would generally be much greater. With prescribed fire we can accomplish multiple objectives.

One comment suggested that BLM adopt the Sagebrush Memorandum of Understanding currently signed by MT Fish Wildlife and Parks and the Beaverhead National Forest.
Fire is an imperative function in our ecosystem. Historically fires burned within the scope of many different weather conditions, fuel types, seasons, topography, etc. Every parameter fire burned under met with a different result adding to the variability of the ecosystem in which it burned. To maintain the variability, it is imperative for land managers to use fire under all natural conditions. The Sagebrush MOU limits the conditions under which prescribed fires can be implemented, thus reducing the flexibility that managers have in applying this important tool. The BLM chooses to retain current flexibility in applying management tools.

One comment recommended using mechanical removal of conifer trees instead of prescribed fire for encroachment to reduce sagebrush loss.
Fire historically maintained the sage community by periodically removing conifer encroachment. Although mechanical treatments can be used, they are more labor intensive and costly, and there are other impacts associated with this tool. The BLM has omitted the two main encroachment units (COR1 and COR2) to leave a large block of undisturbed habitat along the south side of Centennial Valley for wildlife.

A concern was raised that Alternative B fails to protect trumpeter swan nesting habitat.
Management under Alternative B or C would be the same in allotments that have trumpeter swan nesting territories (see Section 2.3.3 page 25).

There was a concern over the loss of security cover and fragmentation due to timber harvest and associated roads.
The prescription for the harvest units was designed to leave screening cover along the roads with the exception of PC3 where human safety concerns were identified. These units were designed to minimize habitat fragmentation and maintain migration corridors

while reducing the increased threat of wildfire due to the large die-off in these stands. The associated road construction will be obliterated and re-contoured or made impassable by slash piling within two years of project completion. We are not aware of data that suggests the timber harvest in the area during the 1980's had a significant impact on elk harvest. These units have now regenerated and are providing ample security cover.

One commenter said that BLM's analysis of impacts to sage grouse habitat was inadequate.
Sage grouse lek counts in the valley have shown that the population is currently stable. Current telemetry studies in the Centennial Valley are designed to identify seasonal habitats and seasonal movements to improve management in these key habitat areas. Implementing allowable use guidelines, incorporating additional rest and deferring grazing until after the breeding season will help ensure habitat requirements are met for a range of sage brush obligate species. Also, proposed livestock management changes to improve riparian habitat toward proper functioning conditions will improve brood rearing habitat. Fences will also be modified to reduce the risk of wildlife mortalities. These are all management recommendations incorporated from the *Management Plan and Conservation Strategy for Sage Grouse in Montana.*

A concern was expressed regarding culverts.
Culverts are becoming issues as understanding of stream systems and their functions progresses. This has not always been the case. Culvert sizing once was limited to base flows. As stream process understanding has increased, it is recognized that culverts must be sized to carry storm flows. Culvert condition and capacity are reviewed during stream assessments. Several culverts were identified as being inadequate or at risk by lateral stream movement. These issues will be mitigated.

Concerns were expressed over WQLS streams.
Nonpoint pollution resulting from forestry practices, agriculture or road building is mostly in the form of sediment. States are responsible for developing Best Management Practices (BMPs). The BLM helped develop and follows Montana BMPs for forestry and livestock grazing. It is recognized that poor grazing practices often result in excessive levels of soil loss, erosion, and sedimentation. It is also recognized that livestock trailing along streams can impact channel morphology and the ability of streams to function properly. The purpose of the watershed/land health assessment is to identify problems and develop solutions which conserve soil and water resources. Allotment Management Plans have been specifically developed to address resource concerns and improve the health of the land and the quality of the water.

Concerns were expressed over monitoring, specifically water quality monitoring.
The monitoring plan which addresses effectiveness monitoring is part of the Centennial EA. See Appendix B. The emphasis of BLM monitoring is focused on land health, i.e. assuring good vegetative cover in the uplands and riparian areas, stable streambanks and effective channel form. A modified Rosgen method, along with greenline vegetation monitoring, is used to monitor changes in stream condition and function. The assumption

is that improving the condition of the uplands and riparian areas will reduce sediment input into the stream and improve water quality.

Concerns were expressed regarding coordination with DEQ.
Section 319 of the Clean Water Act is largely a grant program. The creation and support of watershed groups is integral to its success. The Dillon BLM office supports local watershed groups and serves as a participant and technical advisor. The DFO to date, has coordinated with DEQ in the development of assessments of the Ruby, Big Hole, and Beaverhead Watersheds. Information is commonly shared. The BLM has shared all requested assessment and monitoring information from the Centennial Watershed with DEQ this field season and has coordinated with the DEQ from the onset of the Centennial Watershed Assessment process